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ABSTRACT

This general study reports on Travellers (often called gypsies) with a specific focus on children who attended one school in Norfolk (United Kingdom) during January-July 1991. Divided into six chapters, chapter 1, "An Historical, Legislative, and Educational Perspective on Travellers," offers an overview with distinctions made between the people collectively known as Travellers into Scottish and Irish Travellers, New Travellers, Showmen, and the group on which the research is focused, the Gypsies. Chapter 2, "The Local Scene and the ex-Head Teacher," gives perspectives of a local resident on the Travellers and settled communities, the ex-Head of the Junior School, and the coordinator of the Traveller Education Service. Chapter 3, "The New Head Teacher and Some Staff at Haynes Junior School," goes inside the school and details new policy and staff attitudes. Chapter 4, "Some Children and Staff at Haynes Junior School," describes some children's experience and its varied interpretations, as well as how teachers, children, and families view this experience. Chapter 5, "Conclusion," summarizes the research and offers some tentative conclusions. Chapter 6, "Reflections upon the Conduct of the Research," examines how the research was done and also upon the topics of racism, subjectivity, and bias. A 50-item bibliography is included. (EH)

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TRAVELLERS' CHILDREN IN A JUNIOR SCHOOL IN NORFOLK

with historical, legislative and educational perspectives on Travellers.

E.R.MOLANDER.

Dissertation submitted in part-fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of East Anglia, School of Education, 31st December, 1991.

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Summary.

This is a general study of Travellers and a particular study of a few of their children who attended one school in Norfolk during the period January to July, 1991.

The research is intended to throw a little light on a neglected area. It is also intended to be helpful to the many schools which have such children in their care and to those in educational administration who have responsibilities for the provision of their education. It is insider research. The researcher is Deputy Head of the Traveller Education Service in Norfolk.

Both the scope and the penetration of the study are restricted by consciousness on the part of the researcher of the need to maintain sometimes precarious relationships on which the quality of provision depends.

Chapter 1.

This offers an overview. Distinctions are made between the people who are collectively known as

Travellers. They include Scottish and Irish Travellers, New Travellers, Showmen and the group that is the particular focus of this research , the Gypsies.

Chapter 2.

This gives perspectives of a local resident on the Traveller and settled communities; of the ex-Head of the Junior School; and of the Co-ordinator of the Traveller Education Service.

Chapter 3.

This takes us inside the school and details new policy and staff attitudes.

Chapter 4.

There is a description of some children's experience and its varied interpretation ; and how teachers, children and families view this experience.

Chapter 5.

The research is summarised and some tentative conclusions are drawn that may be helpful for further development of adequate and sensitive provision.

Chapter 6.

The researcher has reflected upon some aspects of the research, including the reason for doing a case study and not a survey; and also upon racism, subjectivity and bias.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I should like to thank Professor Barry Macdonald for all the help that he has given me.

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CONTENTS.

Chapter.	Page.
1.An Historical, Legislative and Educational Perspective on Travellers.	1.
2.The Local Scene and the ex-Head Teacher.	25.
3.The new Head Teacher and some Staff at Haynes Junior School.	47.
4.Some Children and Staff at Haynes Junior School.	65.
5.Conclusion.	78.
6.Reflections upon the Conduct of the Research.	80.
Bibliography.	96.

CHAPTER 1.

An Historical, Legislative and Educational Perspective on Travellers.

Introduction.

In order to set the scene for this dissertation, I shall be taking an historical perspective as well as a look at the legislation that affects Travellers' lives, including references to some of the changes that have taken place in Education since 1944.

When referring to ethnic minorities , I have generally used self-ascriptions because 'tinker' and 'itinerant' are often used in a pejorative sense amongst the settled community in Britain and people who travel in the British Isles prefer to be called 'Travellers'. Gypsies, following a decision by the Court of Appeal, are defined as an ethnic minority. (CRE v Dutton 1988, Commission for Racial Equality).

1. History.

There are many groups of people who call themselves Travellers, including Gypsies . Other groups include

Travellers from Ireland and Scotland, Travelling Showmen, and New Travellers.

Gypsies.

Where did Gypsies come from originally? This is very difficult to find out from historical records because Gypsies have an oral tradition and a minority language that is known in Britain as Anglo-Romani, which contains about twenty per cent of Romani words. (Acton and Kenrick, 1984, 10.) Today the language is being examined from an historical perspective to try to trace the origins of the Gypsy people. There are about sixty Romani dialects, of which Vlax is the most widely spoken. It originated in Rumania and Wallachia, where the Gypsies were enslaved from the fourteenth century to the nineteenth century. Since that time Vlax has been taken to many other parts of Europe and America by the Gypsies, many of whom left Romania following their emancipation in 1848. (Hancock,I. 1988,61,62).

When Gypsies first arrived in Europe, in the fourteenth century, little notice was taken of their language. Although there are some Romani texts of the fifteenth century it was not until the nineteenth century that the Indian origins of the language were

realised. (Hancock, op. cit.)

Of the many legends told by the Gypsies some explain their way of life. There is one that concerns the Crucifixion. Four nails were forged by the Gypsies but only three were used. The fourth nail, described as a '...red-hot piece of iron ...', has followed them ever since and escape from it has been impossible. There are Gypsies in Serbia who believe that their ancestors stole the fourth nail from the cross and were therefore '...condemned to wander for seven years or seven centuries...'(Liegeois, 1983. 18.)

How does the Romani language help to identify where the Gypsies originated from? When they first came to Europe in the fourteenth century their language was thought of as

> **'...incomprehensible jargon, a kind of perverted slang...In 1542 (a)... scholar, Andrew Borde, published a short "manual" with sentences in many languages including Romani....Studies of the Gypsy language remained stagnant for two centuries. But later as methods were increasingly refined, it finally became possible to locate the country of origin of this language: India.' (Liegeois, 1983, 29)**

When and why did the Gypsies leave North West India? There is no documented account of this from the Gypsies themselves. The accounts come from the host countries and coincide with invasions of North West India by Mahmud of Gorh in 1191-92 and later by

Genghis Khan and then Tamerlane. (Tomašević and Djurić, 1989, 15)

> **The Gypsies left India in family groups from about the ninth to the fourteenth century.They did not till the soil or herd livestock. Most likely they performed the most menial jobs or were artisans (mainly smiths) and entertainers, musicians, singers, dancers and animal trainers, acrobats. They also dabbled in magic and fortune-telling. ...Even today many still do the same jobs or practice the same crafts. (Tomašević and Djurić, 1989. 15,16.)**

The Gypsies went through Europe , some remaining in a particular country, others moving on. It was about the fourteenth century that they acquired the name 'Gypsy' because they said that they had come from 'Little Egypt'. Did they come from Egypt and was Little Egypt the same place as Egypt?

> **They came from Epirus, which the common man calls "Little Egypt". The explanation may be that in medieval Europe the whole eastern Mediterranean, including Syria, Greece, Cyprus, and neighbouring lands was known as Little Egypt....And well before the arrival of the Gypsies in Europe, all highway mountebanks and tricksters were dubbed "Egyptians". (Liegeois, 1983, 28.)**

Okely does not believe that the Gypsies came from India.

> **It seems more than coincidence that throughout Europe 'Egyptians',**

> 'Saracens', later called Tziganes or Gypsies , 'Bohemians' and 'Tattares', and other wondering bands variously named and later identified by Gypsiologists, were officially recorded and were thus made visible at the time of the collapse of feudal ism, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. So far this appearance has only been explained in terms of waves of nomads migrating in linear fashion from a single eastern locality. ...A common Indian origin has also been seen, especially by Gorgio (non-Gypsy) members of the World Romany Congress, as a strategy for international solidarity among Gypsies.' (Okely, 1983. 12,13.).

When did Gypsies arrive in Britain? This,once again, is very difficult to trace with any degree of accuracy.The oral tradition has meant that Gypsy history has been written by others from references in legislation and court records or in folklore. Gypsies were first mentioned in Scotland

> ...in 1505 in the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer. They presented themselves to James IV as pilgrims, their leader being lord of "Little Egypt"...In England, this category of persons was first recorded in 1514 in the form of an " Egyptian" woman who "could tell marvellous things by looking into one's hands. (Okely, 1983, 3)

These are references to people who sound exotic and yet by 1554 it was a capital felony simply to be an 'Egyptian'. This Act of 1554 was not repealed until 1723.

In 1615 in Wymondham, Norfolk, Ellen Pendleton , alias Floder, was '...condemned at the Assises in Norfolk for burnying of Windam'. The other 'conspirators' dispersed. A letter was sent to the Justices of the Peace of Leicestershire following a confession by Ellen Pendleton:

> **Wee send you hereinclosed the names and descriptions of certaine vagabondes, accused to have been partakers and conspirators in the burning of Windam in the county of Norfolke, besides other treasonable conspiracies; ...wee have therefore thought fitt to will and require you to use your best endevors for the apprehension of those vagabondes... (Acts of the Privy Council, 1925, Vol.34 1615-1616.281.)**

Two of the people described on the list wore 'Tyncker's apparell' and a third ' travelled in the manner of a tyncker'. There were over twenty seven names on the list including 'Francis Brewerton, who had ben King of Egyptians that rogued about'.

Hancock writes in his article 'Is Anglo-Romanes a Creole?' with reference to such a group:

> **A clue maybe found in a book written in 1566 by Harman, A Caveat for Commen Cursetors, Vulgarly called Vagabones and discussed briefly by J.Hotten in his Slang Dictionary (London 1864) on pp 6-7. Hotten says:' Harman's book, the earliest of the kind, gives the singular fact that within a dozen years after the landing of the Gypsies, companies of English vagrants were formed, places**

> **of meeting appointed, districts for plunder and begging operations marked out and rules agreed to for their common management. In some cases Gypsies joined the English gangs; in others English vagrants joined the Gypsies. The fellowship was found con venient and profitable, as both parties were aliens to the laws and customs of the country...The common people too, soon began to consider them as of one family - all rouges, and from Egypt. (Hancock, 1970. 41-44.)**

Hotten comments on the difficulty the groups had communicating with each other because they had no common language. What evolved was a mixture of languages, including Romani and English, that became known as 'Canting language or Pedlar's French' It is for this reason that Hancock has put forward the argument that Anglo-Romani became more widely spoken than Romani, which developed into 'the now creolized Anglo-Romanes dialect'

In 1851 George Borrow published ' Lavengro. The Scholar - The Gypsy - The Priest.' He was born in Dereham, Norfolk in 1803 and through his writing was an inspiration to Leland, Ibbotson and Crofton 'onto the Gypsy trail'. He talked with Gypsies and recorded the conversations in a way that had not been done before. Much that had been recorded before 1851 was in legal documents. In 1888 the Gypsy Lore Society was founded, with Leland as President and Crofton as Vice-President; it included Groome and

the Archduke Joseph amongst others. The aims of the Society were the gathering and reorganising of material '...so as little by little to approach the goal..the final solution of the Gypsy problem '. At the time this referred to 'Gypsy origins' but today those words '...have an ominous ring and we can no longer refer to the 'final solution' without thinking about the gas-chambers' (Frazer, 1990). Today it is the work done by anthropologists and others, including Okely who researched 'pollution beliefs' (which is a major factor in maintaining ethnic boundaries as explained later), that has helped to increase our knowledge and understanding of Gypsies.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there began to appear some Gypsy writers including Gypsy Smith (1901), Petulengro (1935), Wood (1973)and Whyte (1979).

> **In some there are insights into the author's dilemma as to whether to exorcise or denigrate Gypsy identity for the dominant Gorgio readership. All are informative documents; some more than others..(Okely, 1983. 24).**

Today Gypsies are known to live in India, Europe, Russia, North and South America and Australia; and there are between six to twelve million in the world. The occupations they engage in vary,

choosing as they do those most suited to their survival alongside the predominant population.

In Britain Gypsies maintain a separate identity from the host community. However '... the Gypsies need non-Gypsies to exist' (Gropper,1991, 56) because they are dependant on the host community for a livelihood. They see themselves as independent and will only work for someone for a short period of time before moving to other work. Traditionally, Gypsies and other nomadic people have relied on fruit and vegetable picking or re-cycling scrap metal. Most of the former work is now done by machines or contract labour, whilst there is little money to be made out of re-cycled scrap metal due to the current economic climate. Consequently many Gypsies who live on official local authority sites claim Social Security.

It is the women who have contact with the Gaugio (non-Gypsy) population through health clinics and education, which both involve their children. This contact is seldom regular, often sporadic. I will be discussing the education implications later. Two of the health implications are that Travellers, including Gypsies in East Anglia, have an infant mortality that is five times higher than the national rate and a perinatal mortality that is twelve times higher than the national rate

(Linthwaite, cited in Crout, 1987, 13.) A surgery or casualty department is a place to go to when ill or injured and not when you are well. The other contacts that Gypsies have with Gaugios is when they go 'calling' from house to house, selling their wares and also telling fortunes.

Gypsies do not have 'Leaders' in the way that the settled society does. Social cohesion is maintained by the head of a family, who will meet other heads of families to come to terms with social issues such as marriage and family disputes.

Irish Travellers.

There are about eleven thousand Travellers in Ireland, many of whom travel to Britain for work. This varies but it often includes tarmacing, selling carpets, and re-cycling scrap metal. The language is Shelta, which has a lexicon of about two thousand known words spoken in English grammatical mode.

Many Irish Travellers live in urban areas. Sibley suggests that this is not a recent happening because

> **Chesney makes specific reference to Irish Travellers in London: 'In Victorian times these people of Irish origin formed at least the hard core of the vagrant tinkers. For some years after the mid-century, Shelta is said to have been so common that it was virtually impossible to take a walk through a London slum without hearing it spoken'. Similarly,**

> **Smith mentions accounts of Irish travelling people in Bath and Liverpool in the late nineteenth century.(Sibley, 1980, 81,82).**

Scottish Travellers.

Scottish Travellers have obscure origins

> **'...stretching back to the ancient caste of Celtic itinerant metal workers. Certainly there are references to Tinkers or 'Tinklers' in Scotland as early as the twelfth century.'**
> **(W.M.E.A.S.F.T.C.)(West Midlands Education Authorities Education Service For Travelling Children)**

There was probably intermarriage between Gypsies and Scottish Tinklers. They have much in common, including family size and structure and an ability to fill any gaps in the economy, especially those caused by adverse weather conditions. They have done seasonal work on the land, as well as making articles for sale from local materials including horn and bone, baskets, 'besoms' or brooms made from heather, also heather, to be sold door to door where ever the settled population is to be found.

In Norwich there are some Scottish Travellers who have settled into houses and their children go to school for most of the year. Many travel in the summer time, often returning to Glasgow, Aberdeen or Edinburgh.

Travelling Showmen

> **Fairs in Britain have a long and ancient history. the Romans were once credited with their introduction - the word "fair" itself is derived from the Latin "feria" a holiday - but the tradition is more deeply rooted . They have their origins in the pagan customs of the people who first settled this land. Their seasonal gatherings, held perhaps for the purposes of both trade and festivity, contained within them essential elements of the fair. (Downie, 1987, 2).**

The Romans promoted trade through improved communications in Britain. Fairs prospered during the Roman period and continued to do so and were included in the Christian calendar. Following the Norman conquest fairs were given legal status by being granted a charter.

> **'The sheer number of these fairs - no fewer than 4,860 were chartered between the years 1200 and 1400 - drew not only merchants but itinerant entertainers as well; jugglers, musicians and tumblers - the ancestors of today's showmen.' (Downie, 1987, 2).**

Following the Black Death of 1348-49, there was a shortage of agricultural workers. To help overcome this Edward lll introduced the Statute of Labourers whereby '...able-bodied men (were compelled) to present themselves annually for hire at a stated

wage. These gatherings, or hiring fairs, were mainly around Michaelmas, the end of the agricultural year. The fairs survived in this form until the early eighteenth century. The trading aspects gradually gave way to amusements.The first rides appeared at this time. They were manually propelled by gangs of boys. Later, in 1868 , a King's Lynn agricultural engineer, Frederick Savage, used steam to drive the rides and so changed the character of fairs once again. Roundabouts became much larger. 'The golden age of the fairground' had begun: an era epitomised by the elaborately-carved 'Galloping Horses', suspended on twisted brass rods and leaping round to the strains of a mechanical organ. The Showman's unceasing demand for novelty was matched by the ingenuity of Savage and the other engineers. For many country folk, their first sight of electric lighting was at the local fair. It was also the showmen who first recognised the entertainment value of moving pictures and had the first bioscope shows.

Today Showmen are at a crossroads. Some have begun to embrace the new technology in the form of "Space Invader" machines, whilst other families continue with the traditional rides. Meanwhile the number of people attending fairs continues to fall each year. In Norwich the Christmas and Easter fairs have moved

from the Old Cattle Market , very near the centre of Norwich to the New Cattle Market in Hall Road, which is about a mile from the centre. It is hard work putting up a ride, but there is not much interest from the public to go to the fair. "I can remember a time when people came from fifty miles around to go to Norwich Christmas Fair, but now they have television" (Mrs S., showman's wife, Norwich,1988, a personal communication.)

Since writing this the Christmas Fair has moved to Castle Meadow, in the centre of Norwich, where it has been very successful. The Easter Fair is to be held at the same venue.

The New Travellers.

> **This new travelling public is a manifestation of healthy, organic change in our society. The transformations, dramatic and subtle, that the travellers are engaged in, are very important and are part of the front line of social change that will lead to new integrated lifestyles...All of us in modern 'civilised' society have a powerful need to rediscover our basic, untamed survival instincts.(Morgan, 1986, 17).**

The New Travellers see themselves as seeking a life style, away from urban poverty and poor housing, where they have control of their living conditions. Their mobile homes do provide shelter and comfort;

and give them some control over their lives. However they are visible to the settled population, who in the main view them with hostility for rejecting the settled society. The New Travellers 'are working out an alternative path in a time of social crisis'. (Morgan, 1986)

2.Legislation.

Surprisingly the earliest relevant legislation is the Caravan Sites Act 1968, which states

> **'...it shall be the duty of every local authority ... to exercise their powers under section 24 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 ... so far as may be necessary to provide adequate accommodation for gypsies residing or resorting to their area.' (Halsbury's Statutes. 4th Edition, 504).**

Once a local authority has made provision for sites it can apply to the Secretary of State for the Environment for 'Designation'.This means that:

> **'...it is an offence for any person being a gypsy to station a caravan for the purpose of residing for any period -**
>
> **a. on any land situated within the boundaries of the highway, or**
>
> **b. on any unoccupied land,**
>
> **c. on any occupied land without the consent of the occupier.' (Norfolk County Council, Planning sub-committee. Item 68 . 5.10.79.)**

New Travellers are concerned that there may not be anywhere for them to park in the future because a Department of the Environment paper called 'Defining a Gypsy'(1984) said 'drop-outs, the unemployed, hippies and others who sometimes take to the road' were assumed to be excluded from the 1968 Act. The Act however includes '..persons of a nomadic habit of life'. In 1991 Acton attacked the 'Atkins' report (Clark and Todd,1991a) because it did not consult with Gypsies about caravan sites. Only two Gypsy organisations, which in his view, were not democratically run, were consulted.

Since July 1978 there has been a caravan count twice a year, to enable local authorities to record the number of caravans parked in their area. This year the OPCS (Office of Population Census and Surveys) has advised local authorities to include

> **'Types of Traveller'**
> **Romany Gypsy, Irish Travellers, Long-Distance Travellers, Gypsies in transit through the district, Settled Gypsies, Non-Gypsies in transit through the district, Gypsies on fairground sites, Gypsies on ordinary (non-Gypsy) caravan/mobile home sites, New Age Travellers.(Green, 1991. 67)**

Who will be defining the various groups and for what purpose? Are the New Travellers' fears well

grounded? In Norfolk at the present time there are four local authority sites: Roundwell Site at Costessy (South Norfolk District Council), Mile Cross Site (Norwich City Council), Saddlebow Site (King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council) and Gapton Hall Site in Great Yarmouth (Borough Council). This is a transit site for short-stay Travellers, whilst the other three sites are permanent sites. Each site has an average of eighteen pitches, making the total number seventy two pitches. (There are other sites planned but they have taken between fifteen and twenty years to obtain planning permission).In Norfolk there are very few sites in comparison with the numbers of caravans: in 1989 there were 280 caravans. The 1968 Caravan Sites Act has been largely ignored until recently, inspite of the fact that the funding for sites has recently been available directly from the Department of the Environment.

What has happened to the Travellers parked by the roadside? Norfolk has a 'no needless-harassment policy' because

> **A policy of moving the gypsies on would not be likely to solve the problems being experienced in the county ...Such a policy ...would undoubtedly be costly both in terms of money and staff time. Government policy ...is clearly something that**

> **the County Council have to take into account. (Planning and Transportation Committee, Norfolk County Council. Item 13. 12.3.82).**

This policy has been adhered to on County Council land. However, when a family has moved away from an unofficial site by the roadside then the District Council has frequently created an obstruction (ditch or bank or railings) so that no other Gypsy-Traveller can park there.

The Public Order Act 1986 came about as a way of preventing the New Travellers from travelling in large convoys. The Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd M.P., described the 'hippy convoy' in the House of Commons on June 3rd, 1986 as

> **A band of medieval brigands who have no respect for law and order and the rights of others.**

Two days later Prime Minster Margaret Thatcher declared that her government is 'only too delighted to do anything we can to make life difficult for such things as "hippy convoys". (Gardner,P. 1987. 7) This Act has not been used to move on Travellers in Norfolk but it effectively broke up the New

Travellers' convoy. They last came to Norfolk in 1984 and 1985.

In 1988 Gypsies legally became an ethnic minority on the grounds that

> **...in the judge's view, they had not been absorbed into the population. Many of them had retained a separateness and self-awareness of still being gypsies. (Commission of Racial Equality v Dutton. The Times Law report. 29.7.88.)**

Legislation in the twentieth century has been more regulatory than punitive. Prior to this century it was more punitive.

3.Government Reports and Acts of Parliament Pertaining to Traveller Education.

1944 Education Act.

Section 39 (3) of the 1944 Education Act states

> **...if a parent proves that he is engaged in any trade or business of such a nature as for him to travel from place to place and that the child has attended at a school at which he was a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of the trade or business of the parent permits, the parent shall be acquitted (of any**

> **offence against the requirement for full attendance): Provided that, in the case of the child who has attained the age of six years, the parent shall not be entitled to be acquitted under the sub-section unless he proves that the child has made at least two hundred attendances during the period of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.**

Travellers' children were only expected to attend school for one hundred days. This fact alone sets them apart from other children. Many Traveller parents regard learning the basic skills as being adequate for their children's needs; and this is reflected in the fact that only a small proportion of Travellers' children go to secondary school.

Children and their Primary Schools, 1967.

In 1967 the Plowden report stated that Travellers' children were

> **...Probably the most severely deprived children in the country. (Plowden,L. H.M.S.O. 1967).**

Peter Mercer, President of The Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights (Formerly The National Gypsy Education Council) disputes this statement. (Personal communication.) The report estimated that there were about ten

percent of Traveller children in school of those eligible to go to school.

1980 Education Act.

This Act

> **...unequivocally places a duty on L.E.A.s to ensure that appropriate full- time education is provided for all children residing in their area, whether permanently or temporarily and regardless of the legal status of the campsite where they live. L.E.A. expenditure on provision for travellers can be claimed from "on-area pool" (Swann, 1985, 746).**

Education for All. 1985. (The Swann Report.)

This report devoted a chapter to the education of Travellers' children (chapter 16).

> **Whereas, with the other groups of children, we have been chiefly concerned with their needs within schools, many of the particular educational needs of travellers' children arise because of difficulties in gaining access to the education system at all. In many respects the situation in which travellers' children find themselves also illustrates to an extreme degree the experience of prejudice and alienation which faces many other ethnic minority children. An appreciation of the educational needs of travellers' children requires some understanding of the complex background factors which impinge on this community as a**

whole ...(Swann,1985. 740).

These background factors include inadequate site provision and an unwillingness on the part of parents to allow their children to experience going to school in the light of their own unhappy experiences. Some Travellers fear that they may not be able to dress their children well enough to go to school and therefore they will "stand out".

Education Reform Act 1988.

This, together with the the Norfolk Policy Document which states that all children should have 'Equality of regard and equality of opportunity', has ensured that Gypsy-Traveller children have statutory access to the curriculum, including the 'core' and 'foundation' subjects, in the way that all other children do. Whether these children have effective access is the focus of this research.

Norfolk Traveller Education Service.

In 1984 a teacher was seconded for two years to encourage Travellers' children to go to school in Norwich. Prior to that time there was an 'open-door'

admissions policy for all children. However, very few Travellers' children went to school and those that did attended irregularly. In 1984/1985 seventy six children went to school. In 1986 two teachers were seconded for two years and in 1988 these appointments were made permanent with a County brief. At this time a temporary post was created to teach the fairground children .In 1989/1990 two more staff were appointed, bringing the total to four. Two hundred and seventy one children attended school that year for varying periods: they went to eighty six schools in the County.

How many Travellers' children of school age are there? In October 1989 the Travellers team of teachers conducted a census of the County and found that there were one thousand children who were of school age or would be of school age in the next two years. With only a third of the Gypsy-Traveller children in school, the team's aim is to get more children into school and at the same time provide in-service training for the staff and liaison with the parents. This is intended to help the children to settle into school more easily, and to create an atmosphere of acceptance of all children.

In 1991 another member of staff has been appointed; and at the same time the numbers of children in school between 1990-1991 has risen to three hundred

and twenty one, involving over ninety schools. The number of children attending school since 1986 has risen fairly consistently, as has the number of Travellers' Teachers. At the same time the Departmen t of the Environment is providing 100% funding for permanent sites for Travellers. These are fundamental changes to a way of life that has often involved travelling. Many Travellers have an ability to respond to change whilst at the same time maintaining a separate identity from the settled population.

This completes my research into the social and legislative history of the community with whose children this dissertation is concerned. From this point on the dissertation will be concerned with one local context and one particular school and one small group of such children.

CHAPTER 2.

The Local Scene and the ex-Head Teacher.

In this chapter I will be setting the local scene as it was perceived by an ex-teacher, Mrs Came, who has lived in Haynes for some twenty years. She taught at Haynes Infant School. During that time the idea of a permanent site for Travellers was first mooted. In 1983 the site was built; and Travellers came to live there and their children went to the local schools. The Traveller Education Service began a year later. How was this change perceived by the schools? I have focused on Haynes Junior School because I have been supporting Travellers' children in the school since 1988. The Head Teacher, Mr Neve, who was there when Travellers originally went to the school has since retired.

I have also interviewed the Head of the Traveller Education Service, Mrs Anderson, because she provided another focus to the education of Travellers' children in Haynes Junior School.

First of all a short history of the Oval site since it opened in 1983. There were eighteen pitches on the site, which was managed by a site warden, May, who was a Traveller and lived on the site for some of the time. May's trailer was burnt in 1988 and soon after this the site was vandalised. It was

refurbished and vandalised once again. It was never established who vandalised the site. It was closed in July 1990 to be refurbished again and reopened in December 1990. A new site warden, Keith, was appointed in 1989. Keith was not a Traveller and did not live on the site. The reopening of the site coincided with the time of year when Travellers are looking for a place to 'over-winter', which is why there were some fifteen children of school age on the site in January 1991.

When Mrs Came first arrived in Haynes there were many open spaces but there was no Travellers site. Some Travellers were parked in the area on one of these open spaces. Mrs Came describes this unofficial site.

> **R..it was a dreadful site with absolutely no facilities; and consequently the children came to sch ool very dirty and in fact we had to bath two of them that came. I think most of them were settled in council houses because the land has been built on.**
> **Q. (Was) there quite a big settlement of Travellers in Haynes?**
> **R. There must have been if you call this type of people Travellers but they are not Travellers in the Gypsy sense of the word.**
> **Q. Everybody is called a Gypsy in Haynes?**
> **R. Or a didakoi, in Haynes . You won't hear residents of Haynes use the word Traveller.**
> **Q. I wonder why that is?**
> **R. I don't think that word has act ually been put to them to describe those people. They are just Gypsies or 'dids' really - shortened to 'dids'.**

Q. How have they been received?
R. Very badly.

The Collins English Dictionary says that a Diddakoi is

> **...one of a group of caravan-dwelling, roadside people who live like Gypsies but are not true Romanies.**

Mrs Came has posed the question as to who is a 'real Gypsy' but at the same time implies that it is the other people in Haynes who call Travellers 'Dids'.

She describes the public meeting that was called to canvass local opinion about the proposed site. No Travellers were at the meeting. There was one Gorgio (non-Gypsy) who spoke on their behalf. She had been living near their site and supplying them with water and talking with them.

> **...it was horrid really, the whole meeting, it got violent. The Parish Council were represented , the District Council and the County Council and it was a very nasty meeting. Shortly afterwards the decision was made to have the site there and it was very badly received indeed. I think fear was the guiding point. I think they did not know what to expect and they expected the worst...They were frightened, they were angry and, when the cost of the site was announced , they were furious; and I do not think they will ever live with it, not that generation**

anyway.

The site is situated near a main road on one side and the new burial ground is close by. Adjacent to the site are woods and a field.

Mrs Came has been to visit the site once. She found it 'very dirty' and was interested to learn that the District Council regularly collected refuse from there.

Until 1990 there had been a 'work area' at the far end of the site, where scrap metal was sorted and insulated copper wiring burnt in order to recycle the metal: so the site may well have looked 'untidy'.

How did Mrs Came feel about the site being built in Haynes? She has known many Travellers and taught their children and in the case of one particular family taught their grand children.

> **I was never against it. They have to live somewhere and they must have organised sites. I hate to see them parked on roadsides for many reasons: safety, environmental reasons; and I am not against it at all - I never was. We must all recognise that there are people in our society who have to be cared for - they cannot care for themselves, a lot of them...**

Travellers have only recently begun to live on municipal sites (Caravan Sites Act, 1968). They are dependant on the predominant population for work but

otherwise look for support to their extended families and rarely need to seek support from Social Services. Travellers pride themselves on being able to look after themselves and their families.

I spoke to the Vicar, who told me that a group of Travellers had settled in Haynes over seventeen years ago when he was a Curate in the Parish. Those families are still in Haynes and '...keep themselves to themselves.' He described an incident that had occurred a few days ago. Two boys were by a broken bottle and when he approached them they ran away. Shortly after this the boys' father arrived at the church hall with the boys, who apologised to the Vicar for breaking the bottle. The Vicar commented that this Gypsy father had behaved in a most responsible way and he wished that all fathers were as responsible over their children's behaviour. This illustration was in response to my question as to what view the Vicar had of this group. He knows them as individuals , though he is aware that they are Travellers.

What steps were taken to prepare the local schools, in particular Haynes Junior School, to receive Travellers' children once the site was built? Mr Neve, the ex-Headteacher, was there at the time the

site was being considered. He had admitted some Travellers to his school before the site had even been planned.

> **I believe all children should have a fair education and an equal education and we naturally took them in. Unfortunately they were three of the worst (Travellers' children) that we could ever have started with ...And it was an horrendous experience. They went to the toilet on the playground instead of going inside - their concentration was only about five minutes and then the eleven year old girl who was using structural apparatus would suddenly strike it off the desk...Tremendous fighting, mainly between the two boys...**

Were there some misunderstandings about expectations, cultural differences or frustrations bound up in some of the behaviours so described? The mother of two of the children spoke to me about that early experience as her children recounted it to her. She felt that what the children were being asked to do was never explained to them. Why did they have to sit at a desk for so long when they were unable to read and write in the way that the other children in the class were able to do? The reason that she had agreed that they should go to school was for them to have the opportunity to learn to read and write. The children had enjoyed the experience of going to school and meeting

'Gorgio' (non-Gypsy) children but they did not learn any basic skills. Mrs All was asked to take the children away from the school, but there was no explanation given to her other than they did not fit in. There appears to have been a lack of communication with the parent and with the children about the ethos of the school.(Gypsy fathers' are seldom involved with schools as it is seen as part of the mothers' role in bringing up the children.)

> **In many ways the situation of Travellers' children in Britain today throws into stark relief many of the factors which influence the education of children from other ethnic minority groups - racism and discrimination, myths,stereotyping and misinformation, the inappropriateness and inflexibility of the education system and the need for better links between homes and schools and teachers and parents. (Swann, 1985, 756.)**

Mr Neve had been asked to admit the children by a Save the Children Fund worker. There was a recognition of the civil rights of the Travellers' children to attend school but there was no preparation of those children for school or indeed of the staff and children at the school to receive Travellers' children. 'The development of trust is a first priority', Reiss says. Visiting parents and children on the site and then inviting the parents

and children into school will often help to start to establish trust. There was very little contact between parents and school and therefore a lack of communication of the aims of the school and the wishes of the parents.

I spoke to Mrs Riddock, a teacher who had been at the school for many years, about this period. She summed it up by saying '...you can't upset a whole school for two or three children...'.

At this time there was no Traveller Education Service; so there was no one to consult with who knew the family and could liaise between home and school and help to build up trust. Equally there was no one from the school who visited the site. Though Mrs All's three children did not stay for very long in the school, Mr Neve continued to try to find out what preparations were being made by the County for the admission of Traveller children from the newly built site. He recalls that one day he was asked how he '...would get on with the Travellers aged five to fifteen in a portable classroom ' This was something that he knew nothing about and he learnt later that a decision had been taken in County Hall to which he had not been party. During this time there were no clear guidelines given from County Hall, though he did find the suggestions that an H.M.I. (Her

Majesty's Inspector) made to be very helpful. The H.M.I. considered that two senior staff attached to the school should work with the Travellers' children; and that they should sometimes withdraw the children from class but leave the children to work with the rest of the class for art, games and P.E. The H.M.I. also suggested that Mr Neve should meet him in Cambridge the following week. Mr Neve reported these ideas to Mr Drake, the Central Area Education Officer and County Hall '...but I could get no response from them at all they wouldn't guarantee anything'. This was the first time that there had been considered a need to look seriously at the education of Travellers' children and there were no precedents in Norwich. The need had arisen because a new permanent site was to be built in Haynes, though Travellers had been coming to Haynes for seasonal work for generations, parking on unofficial sites. Many Travellers have been associated with Haynes for a longer period than many of the residents who have moved into recently built local authority and private housing.

Mr Neve had had in his school Travellers' children who behaved in a very different way from the children he was used to admitting. There were no clear guidelines for him or his staff to follow once

the children had been admitted to his school. Later he was told by Mr Drake that the children from the site were to be admitted to another school. Stanley School would close if more children did not go there. So the Travellers' children went to Stanley School, which enabled it to stay open. The advantage that Stanley School had was that it was a Primary School, so that Traveller children from one family could remain in the same school with their siblings.

Mr Neve had been anticipating that the Travellers' children would be admitted to his school and then that plan was changed to allow another school to remain open. He had admitted children to the school before the site had opened and it had caused '...tremendous disruption...tremendous fighting, more between the two boys than with other people...'

The need to plan educational provision for Traveller children had become apparent and there had been the suggestion from an H.M.I. that a unit would be based in his school for Travellers' children. Had there been a unit in the school, would Mr Neve have been in overall charge of it?

A year after the site opened , in 1984, a Travellers' teacher was seconded for a period of two years to support Travellers' children in schools in

the Central Area of Norwich. There was no policy, or guidelines, just a job description. The base was at Haynes Infant School and the teacher was responsible to Mr Drake and to Mrs Williams, a Senior Education Officer in the Education Department at County Hall. In 1986, when two staff were appointed and there were more children in other schools, Mr Neve said of the Traveller Education Service:

> **...it got off on a very poor footing. Now I don't think from County (Hall) there was any real thought or any real plan. It was a fire engine expediency situation and I think that this was the main problem behind it...My criticism was because it wasn't thought out; it was very haphazard. Because it was decided that the children should be spread out amongst the various different schools ...there was an awful lot of wasted time travelling between one school and another.**

The Traveller Education Service was based at one school, the Service was to be provided for all schools with Travellers' children.

Ten percent of the time was spent travelling between schools and sites each week. This was a new service, with no precedents in Norfolk. Mr Neve made further comments on the service.

> **...I don't know how much training you were both given and I felt travelling**

> **from one school to another a tremendous amount of teaching time was lost. And what also concerned me was what I would call welfare time being used rather than teaching time ... and that is where I don't think there was value for money.**

Mr Neve's idea of working with Travellers was teaching support for their children in school with very little involvement with their parents. He remembered the first Traveller children that went to Haynes Junior School, but did not appear to appreciate the support that Traveller parents could give to the school. Getting to know Traveller parents in order to talk with them in anything but a superficial way takes time. 'Welfare time' may not appear to be 'value for money' in the short term: however, in the long term it has been one of the reasons why the number of Travellers' children going to school has steadily increased. The Traveller family network of communications is very effective. This was something that Mr Neve did not see as part of 'education' in the widest sense.

Mr Neve questioned the amount of training that Mrs Anderson and I were both given. It was very much a matter of learning whilst doing the job, because only one other person in Norfolk had worked as a Travellers' Teacher and Mrs Anderson had spent a term working with her. It was up to us to develop

the service, establish priorities and at the same time respond to the immediate situation. We were responsible to Mrs Williams, and to Mr Drake.

I later interviewed Mrs Anderson because she had also worked with Mr Neve. He was always willing to admit the Travellers' children into school; it was how they were regarded once they were in school that was a cause for concern to Mrs Anderson.

> **There did not appear to be any policy on equality of regard...so when there was 'name calling' going on I reported the incident to the class teacher and said 'Would you handle it or shall I?' He then said 'I will' and nothing more was done. Teresa then left because of the quite nasty incidents that were going on - but that was not reported back to the rest of the staff at all - they were quite unaware of why Teresa had left and I felt that maybe if it had been other children that would not have been the case.**

Mrs Anderson asked two members of staff if they had heard that Teresa had left the school and they said that they had no idea that she had left the school or that there was any particular reason for her doing so. Teresa later told Mrs Anderson that she would not return to school because the 'name calling' had continued despite the fact that Teresa knew that her class teacher had been informed. There appeared to be no 'whole school approach' to this issue. Verma, in his study, has this to say about this kind of phenomenon

> **Racism, on the whole, was conceived by staff in psychologistic terms; a personal and aberrant disposition which should be dealt with in an individualistic and incremental manner, if and when necessary. It was not interpreted as an ideology which, along with sexism, channelled political oppression and demanded coherent and systematic opposition.(Verma, 1989, 186)**

Later Mrs Anderson asked a member of staff, Mrs Riddock, if she would like to visit the site because she had said of a Traveller child 'I can't sit any of these (children) next to him'

> **...there was a look of absolute horror - not just disdain - but horror at the thought - and even saying 'would you like me to encourage the parents to come in (to school) - there was again a look of horror - so I felt there wasn't really a value or an understanding of the (Travellers') children.**

It had been recommended to Mr Neve at one point by an Education Officer in County Hall and an H.M.I. that he should have a unit for Travellers' children. This was at the time that the site was being planned. Mr Neve retained this idea .

> **...and so we had a free room that used to be the dental surgery and his (H.M.I) recommendation then was that we should have somebody on a group two and somebody on a group three (salary scale), with a mini bus provided by the authority, who would work directly from the school and that the children would be withdrawn in their withdrawal**

> **groups in the old dental surgery but they would be integrated for as many things as possible, for instance Art, Games and P.E. a lot of the things they would be integrated ...but for special Reading and special Maths they could be withdrawn in small groups and dealt with by these two people.**

This idea of a separate unit did not come to fruition. However the Travellers' children were usually withdrawn from the class when the Travellers' teacher came into school. Mrs Anderson recalls

> **...in class support was not common in 1986 - it was all withdrawal that I saw and nowhere to withdraw to - so you had the anomaly of children who might find concentration within the class very difficult being withdrawn to a space in the corridor with all the movement going on there. And also I think it gave an impression of value or lack of it to the child and what he was doing and also to supporting those particular children...The last time I worked within school they were working just outside the toilet block.**

Supporting Travellers' children at this point in time meant that they did spend time out of the classroom, so that they would be missing what the rest of the children were doing. Many Travellers' children have gaps in their education because they have missed schooling or did not go to school until they were eight or nine years of age and consequently cannot always read and write. However many of the concepts being discussed in class are

understood by Travellers' children when given the opportunity to join in the discussion. Many Travellers' children have excelled in Mathematics, English, Science and Computer Studies, sometimes with the aid of a scribe, and always because they have been regarded as belonging to the class.(Molander, 1990.)

Withdrawing children from class will help to make them feel different when they already know that they are different; and they will be denied the chance to excel in the way the the rest of the class have the opportunity to do. However there was never any meeting to try to resolve the issue of in-class support.

Mr Neve expressed a concern about the time teachers at his school spent with Travellers' children.

> **Now if you have already got over thirty children in the class ...in any half hour lesson you are going to spend one minute with each child if you are going to eek your time out fairly between all the children. Now your Travellers' child, who perhaps comes in at the age of nine and can't read, needs alot more than one minute at a time: therefore they are demanding a disproportionate amount of the teacher's planning time and the teacher's contact time.**

Mr Neve said that he believed in a 'fair education and an equal education'. Is this perhaps what he

meant: the apportioning of time to each child regardless of the needs of any individual child? How would the 'highfliers' fare ? Would they need more time to expand ideas? Perhaps the slow learners would need more time too. So would this idea therefo re suit those children in the middle band of learning? It would allow for mediocrity but not for excellence.

Mrs Anderson said that a teacher had asked Mr Neve if he might spend time making materials for a Travellers' child in his final year at the Junior S chool. He was told that he could not because he 'would be giving more than his allotted apportion of time' to the Travellers' child. Mrs Anderson found this 'A little bit difficult to work with' but it did accord with Mr Neve's idea that it was a matter for the Traveller's teachers to make and supply equipment for the Travellers' child. This could then go with the child to the next school. What this idea did not take account of was that the Travellers' child would once again be denied the opportunity of working with the same books and materials as the other children. In the next school special equipment could be inappropriate. Mr Neve said:

> **You know I still make the point that the programme I feel should be made for that child by the person with the expertise in the Travellers' children so that it can be followed up if they**

> **move - particularly those that are not on site - that are camped out on a piece of waste ground - are there for a month or six weeks and then moved on and might be brought into school. We have had that. Umm some system needs to be organised so that you know exactly where that child is when they come in, so that you can make the utmost use of the time you've got.**

Is it feasible to make a programme for one child in isolation from what the rest of the class are doing? The class teacher is responsible for all the children in the class and therefore has an overview not only of what the children are learning but how they are learning. It looks like a 'neat' idea in theory but in practice could well increase the isolation felt by a Travellers' child and at the same time take away the responsibility for that child's education from the class teacher to the Travellers' teacher. What happens when the Travellers' teacher is not supporting that particular child in class? Mr Neve made no suggestion that he might go onto the unofficial site and invite the children into school. Any Travellers' children that went to the school did so because they were taken to the school by a 'Save the Children Fund' worker or Travellers' teachers. He is concerned that time and systems are organised and into that organisation the children shall fit. There is no suggestion that the organisation shall fit the

children. This suggests that the structure of the school was fairly inflexible at this time. Certainly the expectations of how the staff spent their time both in the classroom and planning lessons were. It had begun to emerge that some of the ideas that Mr Neve had for the Travellers' children were inflexible. One such idea was the establishment of a separate unit so that '...once the children were normal they could integrate in with the others'. Those who hold this idea

> **...subscribe to the view that planned programmes of educational support and social support are necessary to enable ethnic minorities to integrate with the majority society. (Verma. 1989, 162)**

We live in a cultural-pluralist society so that by 'integrating' children into the rest of a school their culture will be assimilated and therefore not valued. By placing children in units, as opposed to the mainstream , they will be seen as being different by the other children; and that very difference may not be valued by the children in the unit or by those in mainstream schooling because they will be denied first hand experience of those differences.

What does Mr Neve mean by 'normal'? Reiss, op. cit., says that the days of concentrating on the 'normal' child are over. Is this the 'average' child that prefers mediocrity to individuality?

Mr Neve had a view on the Traveller Education Service as he did on separate units. He was consulted about Traveller education because Haynes Junior school was the nearest school to the new site. However he did not get any unit or staff to run it and he does not mention being consulted about the Traveller Education service. In fact, he says

> **Although I didn't want Travellers because they inevitably bring problems, yes, if it had been properly resourced we would have welcomed them and we would have tried to integrate them. But the situation that evolved at the end was that it was very much left to the devices of how it ran, it seemed to me, of the people given responsibility for them (the Travellers' children). And they perhaps had very little experience, coming into it fresh.**

Perhaps Mr Neve felt that he should have had ownership of the Traveller Education Service or much more say in how it ran and also where the Travellers' children went to school. His preference was for two schools, each with a unit, so that most of the time the Travellers' teachers would spend in those units and very little time would be spent getting to know parents. This arrangement would not

allow the Travellers' teachers to see parents whilst the children were in school. Traveller parents have very little privacy living in trailers (caravans) and often this was the only time to see them on their own to discuss their children.

There was never any question that Travellers' children could not be admitted to Haynes Junior School or even stay on for a year longer before transferring to the High School. It was much more to do with how the Travellers' children were seen and how they were valued. Though Mr Neve was approached several times, he did not change his point of view. In 1985 Lord Swann published the report 'Education For All' in which it was said:

> **The fundamental change that is necessary is the recognition that the problem facing the education system is not how to educate children of ethnic minorities, but how to educate all children (Swann, 1985,769).**

The Swann report does not appear to have influenced Mr Neve's thinking about Travellers' children.

In 1988 the Education Reform Act , which promoted a broad and balanced curriculum for all children, equally does not appear to have been an influence on Mr Neve's thinking about Travellers' children.

Locally, the Norfolk Policy statement on education says:

> **We believe that all pupils are entitled to equal regard just as they are entitled to equality of opportunity in learning.**

Mr Neve retired in December 1990.

Mrs Anderson has read the parts of this chapter that concern her and she agrees with my interpretation of what she said.

CHAPTER 3.

The new Head Teacher and some Staff at Haynes Junior School.

The new Head Teacher of Haynes Junior School, Mr Davies started work there on the 7th January, 1991. On the 9th January he visited the Oval Gypsy Caravan site and was preparing to admit six Travellers' children to his school. How did this happen so quickly and how were the children received in the school by staff and pupils?

Mrs Anderson (County Co-ordinator for Traveller Education) had worked with Mr Davies in another school: consequently, when he was appointed Mrs Anderson wrote to congratulate him and at the same time mention that there were Travellers' children in the school and that the site was near to the school. He responded to that letter before the beginning of term and agreed to visit the site as soon as possible. Also visiting the site later that day was the head of Haynes Infant School.

How did Mr Davies feel about visiting the site? I had arranged to meet him at the school and drive him to the site. I had never met him before but I felt that he was apprehensive.

I was lent on quite heavily - you come and have a look - and I think tha

t obviously worked and it was going down to the site that made a lot of difference - so I think the site visit was very important - and even though your experience was very important at that stage - it makes you feel very differently - and I was just determined to be very positive about the whole experience - because it was new. I tried to be very open about it.

Why should a Head Teacher visit a site? It was not usual in this school for the Head Teacher or indeed teachers to visit parents who lived in houses before their children came to school. I could have talked to Mr Davies about the children and their parents on the site but I could never have explained the importance of the family group and how central it is to the Traveller way of life.

He had talked to his acting Deputy Head, Mrs Riddock, about the proposed visit. She told him about the school's previous experience of having Travellers' children on roll. The feeling amongst the staff was 'Oh dear - this could be a problem if we have Travellers in this school - it hasn't worked before.' I asked Mr Davies why the site visit had made a difference to him.

Probably because the parents were as wary and as unsure as I was and so in many respects we were sharing something there. They were very uncertain about sending their children to the school and their children were nervous about it. It could be that they had bad experiences before.

There was an empathy between Mr Davies and the Traveller parents and children that was established immediately in a way that no amount of talking could have done, because emotions were involved. Mr Davies had been to visit the Travellers on their site and by so doing was showing them that he took the education of their children seriously.

How was Mr Davies regarded by Mrs Anderson, who had known him for sometime? She had gone to visit him as soon as he had got back from visiting the Travellers.

> **Well, for a start he actually sat down and didn't sit the other side of the desk. He sat beside me and looked friendly. We were on the same wave length, which is why I am glad he got the job - that he was actually concerned about individual children - the speed of the response was there - yes, there were questions like 'How much support are we looking at?' But it was not put in the same way. A lot had to do with the manner - the entitlement of the children to support and not the school. Willing - open - willing to learn - willing to be passed around on site and willing then to be talked to. Just easy really - the place (the school) was tension-free.**

The approach of the new Head Teacher was, to date, proving to be very different from that of the ex-Head. The new Head was considering the needs of individual children and was willing to consult with Mrs Anderson about Travellers' children in general.

At the same time he realised how some of the staff felt about Travellers' children.

Mrs Riddock was the Acting Deputy Head because the Deputy Head had retired at the same time as Mr Neve. Haynes Junior school had two people who were new to senior management in the school and one of those people was new to the school. This was perhaps an appropriate time to try to effect some changes in attitude towards Travellers' children and Mrs Anderson was quick to take this opportunity. How did Mrs Riddock view things at this stage?

> **The new Head had never come up against the problem of integrating the Traveller children and had never ever had them in his school. So he was totally open-minded. He did not know what to expect. And quite frankly I did discuss it a lot with him. He was quite apprehensive. He had no past experience to dampen the enthusiasm if you like. He had nothing else to go by ...he didn't know where to start. I think that is why a visit to the site was a good starting point. To make himself known and to see for himself. Because there were going to be problems with numbers. That was his main concern - the numbers - not the children themselves.**

Mrs Riddock still retained certain memories of Travellers' children, but she was clear that Mr Davies saw the issue in terms of numbers of children and not ethnicity. Mrs Riddock appears to have seen the visit to the site as a starting

point, whereas Mr Davies saw it as a point in time when he realised that Travellers were people with feelings and could identify with them.

Mr Davies found that by talking to the staff before the children were admitted 'they began to become more receptive to the idea - they were more open to change'.

At one o'clock on Friday 11th January 1991 I took Mrs Lee and her three children, Violet, Sylvia and Jim, together with Mrs Taylor and Sean, to visit Haynes Junior School. Sean had been at another school since he was five and was happy being shown round the school with his mother. Mrs Lee, Violet and Jim seemed very apprehensive and it later transpired that Jim did not want to be put in a class where there were no other Travellers' children: he wanted to be with Sean. Sylvia was interested in what was happening in the school.

The children were admitted to the school on the following Monday and on the Wednesday Jim had approached Mr Davies and asked him if he could move class to be with Sean. I asked Mr Davies what he felt about this.

> **I was quite happy. Really the criteria for fitting the children in - where ever possible - (was) obviously in their correct year group - but it was more to fit social adjustment than academic achievement ...so that the children did settle in . ...It was**

> **important that they came and they settled and they stayed. If we had insisted that he stayed in another class and he was on his own then we perhaps might not have ever seen him and it was important that he came.**

Jim was very apprehensive about going to school, but he felt confident enough to approach Mr Davies about changing his class. Was this because he felt that Mr Davies would understand? After all, he had been up on the site and met him with his family. Jim's mother had suggested to him that he should do this. She evidently had confidence in Mr Davies that he would understand that Jim did not want to be in a class where there were no other Travellers' children. His only other experience of school was for a short time at a two class Primary School where he was with other Travellers' children and his mother said that he did not learn anything there. Sean was admitted to Mr Gray's class and was later joined by Jim.

Mr Gray had been teaching in London; and this was his first experience of teaching in Norfolk and his first experience of teaching Travellers' children. I wondered how he felt about having Travellers' children in his class. He didn't really remember. 'I do not know whether I thought "Oh trouble" because there is a reputation one has heard of'. However it meant 'a great deal more work' for

him because Sean and Jim were at the early stages of literacy. I also wanted to know how the other children had responded to the boys.

> **I haven't heard any condescension or criticism but generally a helping out and a realising that Jim and Sean were not able to do certain things and they just got on and helped. They (Jim and Sean) were also quite good for the weaker kids who thought 'I am not so far back' ...**

I worked in the class supporting Sean and Jim, sometimes on their own and often with the other children in their group. The support I gave was for forty minutes three times a week. Jim left first, having stayed a term. I went to see him at home because I wondered if he would like to have any reading books to take with him. He declined my offer, then showed me his new watch. He had learnt to tell the time whilst at Haynes School and was very pleased with this achievement. It meant that he had gained something positive from being at Haynes School that would be with him for the rest of his life and he had also learnt that schools had something useful to offer him.

I asked Mr Gray how he saw our service. Did my presence in the class room have any affect on the other children in the class; and also how did he view me, a Travellers' teacher?

> **I think (if) Mr Davies had told me on**

> **Monday 'here are two Travellers' children' I would have been very very thrown and struggling to know what they were doing - to do the right work - know what they are capable of ... I think as well talking to you about Travellers helps ... it is not just the information you provide - it would be the fact that you talk about it...The provision of material, however good or bad you may think it is, is certainly a lot better than they would otherwise have had - I am sure of that.**

Mr Gray seemed to find the support given to him and the boys of help to him. He also said ...'it is more difficult to be committed to them (Sean and Jim)...because they are going', which I felt was very frank and an aspect that I could understand. It is one reason why teachers need support: there is more work for the class teacher with Travellers' children because they have often missed schooling.

I have been focussing on Travellers' children in this research even though they are a small minority of children in any school. They sometimes highlight a problem in school but do not cause it. This distinction is sometimes very difficult for staff to realise, particularly in a school that does not have a whole school approach to 'behaviour' in its widest sense. So, when Mr Gray mentioned to me that the staff were concerned about discipline, the fact that there was no positive focus, only a negative one, I wondered how other members of staff felt. I will

come to that issue later.

Violet and Sylvia were admitted to Mrs Riddock's class. I asked her how she felt about this.

> **Basically happy because the Head had b een up to the site and he was fully involved. He knew quite a bit about the children and their background ...he felt that there wouldn't be any problem and I said I would be happy to have them. They came well recommended. I know that is a funny thing to say, but I wouldn't have been so happy if I had known there might be problems because of the problems I had already got. Being told that they wanted to come , eager to come, I said well in that case I would be happy to have them.**

Mrs Riddock was relaxed about admitting the girls because the Head had visited the site and had been able to reassure her that the girls were not going to be a 'problem'. As an experienced teacher should she not be able to handle problems? 'They came well recommended' suggests an element of selection and also that they were coming into the school and would have to make all the adjustments. Why could they not be met halfway? Was this cautious attitude due to an experience that Mrs Riddock had previously had?

Mrs Riddock found that the girls were mature and that they made a distinction between the pupils they worked with and those they socialised with.

I worked with the girls three times a week and I found that there was a reluctance to talk about

themselves, a reluctance that many Travellers have when talking in a public place such as a classroom. However, they were very willing to work and seek help both from me and the girls sitting at their table.

I asked Mrs Riddock about the support she had received in the past from the Traveller Education Service and also a comment on my support.

She had received support from a member of our team, Mrs Anderson , during the time Mr Neve had been Head of the School. This is what she said about that period:

> **We did not have a happy relationship. Now, how much that was due to the regime or to the personalities involved I don't know... I mean there are still some staff that are still not happy about Travellers coming into school for their own background....At one point we did have a suggestion made to us that the whole way of working in school should change for this very very small minority we had in. That caused quite a mixed reaction with the staff.**

Is Mrs Riddock protecting herself and her feelings about Travellers' children when she says 'some staff are still not happy about Travellers coming into the school'. If there is room in school then the children cannot be refused entry. Instead of being a civil right that all children have, Mrs Riddock is viewing entry to school as conditional

on not being 'a problem'.

Mrs Riddock and Mrs Anderson found it very difficult to work together. Mrs Anderson thought that it was because there was a genuine confusion about her role and responsibility.

> **...whereas it had been viewed as supporting the child - and therefore the child was viewed as not the responsibility of the teacher ...at all. But the class teacher would keep an eye on the child until I came in therefore any devising of work became secondary to waiting for my next visit. ...One time when I tried to talk to Mrs Riddock...there was a surprise that I should want to discuss it and that I should have come in with a pre-planned idea, administer it and back off. I did set up a meeting with staff - I would have liked once a week but they said once a fortnight would be fine....there was no appreciation of what our role was...**

There seems to be a lack of communication between the staff teaching Travellers' children and Mrs Anderson. The role of the Travellers' teacher changed in 1988 from supporting children in school to supporting schools and parents. This change acknowledged the fact that there was a need in schools to support staff in preparing to admit Travellers' children by way of in-service training. Mrs Anderson found that the flyers containing details about in-service training regarding

Traveller Education never got through to the staff at Haynes Junior School, so they never had that opportunity.

> **There was a lack of communication because I could not get through to Mr Neve . ...I wanted to pick him up and say 'Look'! If I went to talk to him I was lucky if I got out two sentences. I was talked at - what my role should be and that I wasn't doing it so ' get on with it'. And there was no space to say ' well actually you have got it all wrong' Because he would say 'Right thank you. Goodbye'.**

The frustration that Mrs Anderson felt comes through: so does the idea that Mr Neve was going to run his school in his way and his politeness was probably dismissive rather than considerate.

Mrs Anderson felt that in-service training would have given the staff an opportunity to talk through their perceptions of the role of the Travellers' teacher and their feelings about Travellers' children.

> **...there were comments within the staff about having been racist jokes, but not particularly about Travellers; but that was also concerning because I felt that there was a whole attitude that needed looking at and the Travellers just happened to be part of it and I am sure one of the difficulties was being an 'A' too. (Salary scale)**

Mrs Anderson felt that her status, not being that of a Head Teacher at that stage, did not give her

the credibility she might have had to talk to Mr Neve as an equal and therefore she was not given the access to give in-service to the staff. She realised that the need was there but the Head was not acknowledging that her role was very different from how it had been originally conceived.

If there were comments about racist jokes amongst the staff then there were some members of staff who were not valuing other people.

I asked Mrs Riddock if my support had been of value to her.

> **But can I say on a very personal note you have made a lot of difference by the way you have approached us. I mean that makes all the difference. ...I mean that you have been willing to talk and not pronounce - from past experience once you get onto another footing then things can grow. If you set off on the wrong foot you never get back again. I have felt that your approach has been right.**

I was aware that Mr Davies' 'open' style of leadership had greatly decreased the tension in the school and this meant that I felt more welcome. I was also concerned that there had been very real differences in the past, but I was conscious that this was an opportunity to make a new start with a senior member of staff that I had not previously worked with. I was concerned at the way she had talked about the two girls 'they came well recommended' and I thought the way to approach this

was by valuing all the children and by taking time to listen and talk with Mrs Riddock . This became easier as the early apprehension gave way to trust. Later in the term Mrs Riddock was appointed Deputy Head of the school. I realised that by working with Mrs Riddock that she could see that Violet and Sylvia were individuals in their own right in the way that they were able to choose their own friends.

When I interviewed Mr Gray he was concerned because there was no positive focus to discipline so that children's achievements were not acknowledged in any way. He felt that the focus was on the children with problems . When the subject had first been broached by Mr Davies at a staff meeting '...it was woof! We spent an hour talking about it' Mr Gray saw it also in terms of how it pertained to his class room. Instead of coming in noisily, having thrown their bags in the cloakroom, the children would come into the classroom and get on with their work.

I asked Mrs Smith what she thought of the children's attitude to staff.

> **In many ways I was fairly disappointed that there isn't more respect for members of staff generally... the children havn't got equal respect for members of staff and perhaps we havn't worked as a whole school, which may possibly be due to the fact that it is quite large for a Junior School and**

> **that it is easier and appropriate in many respects to work as an upper and a lower school, but that doesn't actually help the children's attitude to staff. I still feel perhaps there is not enough discipline and lots of the children seem to lack self-discipline.**

Mrs Smith taught in the 'lower' school and was aware that the teachers in the 'upper' school had more respect. The names 'upper' and 'lower' suggest a hierarchical system and 'upper' may well imply being 'better' to some people. Mrs Smith took a whole-school perspective of discipline as well as the individual child.

Mrs Fisher spoke to me about discipline from the point of view of the child and their part in the 'ownership' of the school.

> **We are trying much harder to get them (the children) to be responsible for their own behaviour - and to see that they can make a difference by doing what they can. Although what you are doing may only be a small bit - when it is part of a whole - it can make a difference - particularly we have been trying to sort out behaviour...not by just ranting and raving but by saying it is your school - your behaviour matters - and you can change it.**

Mrs Fisher places a value on each child because if their behaviour matters then they matter as individuals and she sees it as necessary for the children to realise that for themselves.

In the Summer Term I interviewed Mr Davies again. He had an overview of discipline and a plan that he had worked out with his staff:

> **It is being looked at as a total school policy...it will take twelve months to develop a behaviour policy within the school and issues such as reward and punishment come into this...we have set up our own playground project which is looking at behaviour ... showing respect for other people when they are playing games and looking at how we can furnish the playground suitably.**

Mr Davies has a very open style of management. It permits current school issues to be talked about openly and plans to be made that include the whole staff. This is a very different style to Mr Neve's. As Travellers' teachers Mrs Anderson and I found it very difficult to approach him with any new ideas. Perhaps the 'climate' was not right for the staff to approach him about discipline. Mrs Riddock had been concerned about children who were a 'problem'. Was this because there was no whole school approach to discipline and each individual teacher was left to discipline their own class? If there was no sharing of problems that were encountered by all staff, then it could be that the Travellers' children were not the ones to cause problems but they simply drew attention to the fact that there was no whole school approach to dealing

with problems caused by behaviour. Did the Travellers' children that Mr Neve first admitted to the school highlight a problem that already existed in the school? Mr Davies had an 'open' approach to new ideas. One of the first things he did in the second term after he had become Head was to discuss a whole school approach to behaviour. The need had been identified by the staff and the concern was for all children.

The Travellers' children were positive about school and their regular attendance confirmed this. They became part of the school and there was never any question that the Travellers' children were seen by the staff as a 'problem' from the point of view of behaviour.

When I had written this chapter I returned to the school and showed the relevant parts, where they are mentioned and quoted, to Mr Gray, Mrs Smith and Mrs Fisher and Mrs Riddock. I saw each member of staff separately.

Mr Gray told me that I had got a fact wrong about his previous job; and I have deleted this. However, I have retained the fact that he was new to the school and had come from London to a rural county. He agreed to this. He also agreed with my interpretation of what he had said.

Both Mrs Smith and Mrs Fisher agreed with my analysis of what they had said.

It was to Mrs Riddock, the Deputy Head, that I realised that I would find it difficult to show all that I had written as a researcher, because it conflicted with my role as a teacher in a school where I had been trying to establish a positive relationship. I showed some of what I had written to her which she said was 'fair'. She disagreed with my statement when I said that she was new to senior management. I suggested that this might be 'middle management' but she did not agree.

Mrs Riddock also said that she had used the phrase 'they (the Travellers' children) came well recommended' because it had been said to her.

The last point of difference that I had with concern ed the preparation of the Traveller parents prior to their children going into school. Mrs Riddock thought that their admission into school was without difficulty because they were children who 'behaved well'. I thought that the new Head visiting the site made all the difference to the families and to him. It seemed to give the parents confidence about their children going into school.

CHAPTER 4.

Some Children and Staff at Haynes Junior School.

There were six Travellers' children admitted to Haynes Junior School in January 1991. I supported four of them and Ms Eade supported the other two. One of the children, Essie, was in Miss Miller's class. I had known Essie for some time and was aware that she had been to several schools in the Norwich area and had not been particularly happy at school. Nor had she made much progress with learning to read and write.

Miss Miller had looked forward to receiving a Travellers' child into her class:

> **To be honest I was quite pleased. You hear lots of things about Travellers' children like you hear lots of things about black children and I thought 'Good. I would like some Travellers' children in my class even for the challenge of it'.**

Miss Miller was aware that Haynes Junior School was, in the main, a mono-cultural school and that there was little awareness of ethnic diversity amongst the children in her class. Miss Miller had been at Haynes Junior School since her probationary year, three years ago. She had worked with the ex-Headteacher Mr Neve as well as Mr Davies . I

wondered what differences she had seen in their management style.

> **Yes, I think because this new Head can foresee staying for sometime (he) can foresee the changes he wants to make and every thing seems to be going in a much more positive light. I think the ex-Head knew that he was retiring so you can't blame him for slowing down so much...I think the management team plays a less important role than it used to. And so a lot of the staff think this is a bit more open... more available to staff earlier on than having to be filtered down.**

Miss Miller accepted the fact that Mr Neve would not be looking to make any changes within the school. She found that the 'more positive light' of the new Head had meant that she felt that she was able '...to make more innovations because things are more open'. She also said 'I feel more able to make suggestions'. Making 'more innovations' and 'suggestions' seems to mean that Miss Miller felt that she had more ownership of the running of the school as well as of her classroom. Having ownership means having a stake in what one is doing and therefore an opportunity to develop a style of working in conjunction with other colleagues.

When Essie came into Miss Miller's class the topic that was being explored was 'Homes'.

Ms Eade, the Travellers' teacher supporting Essie, found the class teacher 'really welcoming'. When

she had been working with Essie for a few weeks she felt that the time was right to ask Essie

> **...if the class knew that she was a Gypsy... She said 'Yes, that was okay'... she was obviously quite happy with them knowing, and I was getting the feeling that there was no uncomfortableness about them knowing, that she was a Gypsy... She said 'The thing is they do not know what a trailer is. They think that it is one of those bogey trailers, you know, that you put on the back of a car'.**

Because Ms Eade knew that Essie felt comfortable with the idea that the other children knew that she was a Gypsy, she was able to suggest that a video be shown to the class to help explain to them what a trailer was. The video, made by the Traveller Education Service, was of Travellers talking about their lives and it included interiors of their trailer homes as well as a visit to Appleby Horse Fair. Ms Eade realised that there was a risk involved when she was planning it, but when it came to the time that the video was being shown she found that she

> **...was seeing it through ten year old's eyes and I hadn't before and I was wondering whether there may be bits that they may find funny and laugh and suddenly I was a bit anxious and I watched Essie's face. I stood at the back - anyway it was fine. Essie's face got redder and redder when it (the video) was on. It was excitement more than anything else and she was making eye contact with other kids in the class. But when the video was finished the children were just**

amazing - the reaction was wonderful. They dealt with every issue ...in a very constructive way.

I asked Miss Miller what the issues were that came from the video.

Mostly the negative side ...oh that is not fair ... a lot of issues came up like racism and a lot of the children were saying that they are the same as everyone else - it is not just because they travel - why should they be discriminated against.
Q. What did you do about the racism that came up - how did you handle that?
R. Well, being a black person I had to control myself actually. You know, just talking to them about how unfair it is - and a lot of the children were saying that anyway.

It was Ms Eade who responded to most of the questions, which included ones about 'dirt, burning caravans , stealing and dogs'. However, she included Essie by asking Essie to explain any points that were specific to the Traveller lifestyle. She remembered a question that Essie asked: 'How can people tell the difference between a Gorgio and a Traveller?'

Essie later told me, when I interviewed her, that Ms Eade had been asked the question 'Can you be a Traveller after being a Gorgio?'. Essie said that you could not. She commented that after that afternoon people were nicer to her 'In friendly ways - playing'. She also told me that she was good

at maths and was 'getting better' at reading and writing. Essie said of the school 'It is the best school I have been to'.

I interviewed Lisa, Essie's friend, at Miss Miller's suggestion. She said that she had

> **never had a Traveller person in my class but she is like every other person except that she travels, moves around the place.**

Lisa is seeing Essie as a person in her class who has become her friend, who is '...funny and she can take jokes'. She hopes that Essie will return to the school; but she has no wish to travel herself because she 'would loose my friends from the school, and relatives..' She says that Essie '...travels, moves around the place'. She does not appear to understand the reason why Travellers travel (to where there is work).

This had been a learning experience for everyone in the class that day and at many different levels. The children not only learnt about trailers and the way Travellers live; they also learnt that there was someone in their class who had a very different lifestyle from their own and yet came to school. Many of the causes of prejudice were talked about in a safe place, the classroom, and as part of the topic 'Homes'. Everyone was allowed to explore their

own feelings.

Later that week the class played a game which involved three groups. One group was to put forward arguments why Travellers should live on official sites , another why they should live on unofficial sites and a third group to consider Travellers living in trailers on their own private land. The outcome was that most children thought that Travellers should live on official sites, though there were some children who did not agree and were quite dissatisfied with the outcome, which Miss Miller thought was 'good'.

This was an experience very different from the one that Mrs Fisher described to me when her class of seven and eight year olds had been exploring the topic 'Homes' earlier this year. She had wanted to introduce the idea that not everyone lived in a house. There were no Travellers' children, so she said to the class 'some people live in caravans'. She described the response from two children who had said 'Oh, Gypsies'.

> **'Oh they are dirty' - They are smelly' 'They make a mess' - 'They steal' - all the traditional (prejudices) that may or may not have foundation. But you can't generalise, you have to take people as individuals. You certainly can't say that about one child or two children because they happen to live in a caravan - they have all got this string of prejudices stacked up behind them. I don't think**

that is right - and I had quite a long talk - obviously with the class as a whole - but basically aimed at those two children.

Mrs Fisher talked to the class and told them that the Travellers she knew were not like this. However, she thought that these ideas come from the children's parents. 'I mean, I know their families - and it is their parents speaking'. She did not feel that she could say that their parents were wrong: 'I would simply say I don't think that's right and I think differently'.

Mrs Fisher felt that the other children would be influenced by her talk because they were young and they '...didn't have a strong opinion either way'. There had been a Travellers' child in her class last year: so, when the same topic was being explored, '...we made a big thing of "isn't Bill lucky to live in a caravan" - and a lot of children thought this was great'. This was viewing caravans from a Gorgio point of view, because they are associated with holidays and therefore fun and not everyday living. It would certainly give some idea of the amount of living space there is and the lack of privacy. Mrs Fisher did not say why Bill was 'lucky' to live in a caravan. Were the other children 'lucky' to live in houses? Was it the fact

that Bill lived in a caravan that made him different or the fact that he was a Traveller?

This year Bill is in Mrs Smith's class. I have known him and his family for the last five years. His mother, Mrs Price, rang and asked me to accompany her to view the Sex Education videos that all parents in Bill's year were invited to see. Mr Neve was Head at the time and he watched the first video with us. Whilst he was putting the second video on he said that it was really important that children should receive sex education and that these videos were 'Good'. When I got back to Mrs Price's trailer she said

> **I am not going to let Bill watch those. We all live too near to each other and I can't imagine what he can be thinking. I never had any sex education and I am not sure how it is going to help him.**

I advised Mrs Price to go and see Mrs Smith because, though I was aware that this is one of the relevant cultural differences between Travellers and the predominant population, I was not certain that Mr Neve would be aware that there were such differences in outlook.

Mrs Smith told me about this meeting with Mrs Price. At that time the staff had not seen the video and she arranged with Mrs Price to withdraw Bill

whenever the videos were to be shown. Later, however, when Mrs Smith did see the videos she realised '...how unsuitable they were for this age group'. She spoke to Mrs Price

> **...and (I) said I wasn't happy with them either. I talked about previous videos we had shown and told her I thought the information was far more suitable for this age group. I told her the way we would be teaching it as an integrated health project so it wasn't seen as sex education in isolation but part of their school experience... you know part of learning how their bodies work and how to look after their bodies and having done that she was happy for him to take part in it the same as every other child.**

Mr Neve had not consulted with the staff prior to showing the video to the parents. However, Mrs Smith was able to take the decision herself to allow Bill to miss the videos. Later, when more appropriate videos were introduced, as part of an integrated study, Mrs Price agreed to allow Bill to take part in these lessons. This all occurred just before Mr Neve retired. There seems to have been a lack of consultation with the staff on the one hand and a degree of freedom to take decisions about the curriculum, including access by a member of staff, on the other hand. Mrs Smith was being flexible in her response to the concerns of one parent . This response was to a situation that had arisen and was

not of her making but was more a reaction than a reasoned response.

Why was Mrs Price so concerned that Bill should not see the sex education videos? Traveller women are expected to stay married to one man, bring up the children, and cook and clean for the family. At the same time they are expected to earn a living from fortune telling and selling objects like charms or paper flowers to the Gorgios by going from door to door. It is at this time that they exploit the Gorgio stereotype of the Gypsy woman, and are encouraged to do so by the Gypsy men. The women then go home and become subservient to their husbands once again.

> **...the extraordinary contrast between the outsider's stereotype of the Gypsy woman, and the ideal behaviour expected of her by the Gypsies themselves; the two are more closely connected than the conventional** opposi **tion between fact and fantasy, the real and the ideal. The relationship is reflected in the Travellers' beliefs in female pollution. This cannot be satisfactorily explained through the Travellers' internal organisation alone , but can be properly understood only when set in the context of the Travellers' external relations and of the more general pollution taboos between themselves and Gorgios. (Okely, 1983, 201)**

It is through the pollution taboos (including

menstruation, childbirth and death) that Gypsy men are able to exercise control of the family and can maintain a distance between their community and the predominant community. Mrs Price did not want Bill to see the sex education videos and had experienced much anguish after watching the videos herself because there were cartoons of two adults having sexual intercourse. She agreed to let Bill see the other videos because they contained scenes of puppies and kittens being born, scenes that are familiar to most Gypsy children and not part of the pollution taboo.

Though Travellers are a small minority in Haynes Junior School, their presence in a mainly mono-cultural school has caused questions to be raised about how people are valued.

Miss Miller's class experienced this through the showing of the video. The prejudice that is often associated with Travellers was explored with a Traveller child taking some part in the discussion.

There were no Travellers in Mrs Fisher's class. By talking to the whole class about the fact that she knew some Travellers, and questioning the two boys who had shown a prejudicial attitude to Travellers, she hoped that she had caused them to think.

Mrs Smith had empathy with Mrs Price and was

prepared to allow Bill to be absent when the sex education videos were shown. She appreciated that Mrs Price had very deep feelings and anxieties about sex education even though she did not necessarily know the underlying reasons.

These three teachers have shown that they have a wil lingness to meet Travellers half way by showing a respect for their culture in the way that they handled the issues that arose.

The first two had taken place since Mr Davies had become the Head Teacher and the third one occurred just before Mr Neve left.

Mr Davies was aware that there was a need to have a 'whole school approach' to behaviour, and with the co-operation of the staff had helped to set it in motion.

I showed Ms Eade, of the Traveller Education Service, this chapter. She had worked with Miss Miller and Essie. She said she was 'shocked' to find how negative Miss Miller was when the class were commenting about the video. She also said how very 'cagey' Miss Miller had been about Mr Neve. She agreed with my analysis and did not have anything more to add.

I was unable to see Miss Miller because she left the

school in July 1991.

I also showed Mrs Smith and Mrs Fisher the relevant parts of this chapter.

Mrs Smith told me that the reason that she had been able to persuade Mrs Price to let Bill see the original videos that pertained to Sex Education was that they were part of a whole which included looking and caring for 'Ourselves'.

Both Mrs Smith and Mrs Price agreed with what I had written.

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusion.

I started by giving a broad historical context within which to locate Travelling communities and one Travelling community in particular: the Gypsies. There emerged from this historical account an ethnic minority with different values from the predominant population. There are distinguishing features of the culture which could have implications for the Education Service and help to explain some of the problems between that community and the settled community.

I have also examined the legislative framework through which the settled community has formalised its obligations to the minority. In that account we can see that, over a long period of time, the legislation has become more civilised.

I have looked at the local scene and offered a history which indicates the community context of both the settled and the Traveller communities.

I have detailed the story of the recent history of one particular school. Let me summarise this story

as it emerged. The new Head was prepared to meet the needs of all children, which he demonstrated to the Travellers when he visited their site. It was the learning needs of the Travellers' children that were considered by the new Head as well as a whole school approach to 'behaviour'.

What we see are some promising developments in one particular area: the Education Reform Act, 1988. In offering a '...balanced and broadly based curriculum...' (Maclure, 1988, 1), the needs of all children should be met, including ethnic minorities. How those needs are met will be determined by each individual school, which will be managing its own budget under L.M.S. (Local Management of Schools).

We also saw that the Traveller Education Service Teachers , by working in conjunction with a school, can make a significant difference to the school, the Travellers and their children.

Finally, how typical was this experience ? It is very difficult to generalise. However, schools that are prepared to meet Travellers' children and their parents halfway, and value all children, are able to make school a positive experience for everyone concerned. There are an increasing number of schools in Norfolk that value having Travellers' children on their roll.

CHAPTER 6.

Reflections upon the Conduct of the Research.

At the start of this research I reflected what it was that research was beginning to mean to me and how very slowly the M.A. course had changed the way that I approach situations. The separate roles of teacher and researcher were beginning to come together.

> Entering the world of research was for me rather like entering an oak panelled hall where I realised there was a door only because I could see the handle. I went over to the door and knocked. There was no response: so with very great difficulty I managed to push the heavy door open. The room that I entered had pictures on one side that were somewhat familiar to me. On the other side of the room there were mirrors that showed my reflection and at the same time reflected the pictures that I had first seen. This showed me that I was part of these pictures. The room was very bright in contrast to the hall and I felt an excitement about being there together with the challenge of trying to identify all that was happening in this room. There were parts of the floor that were revolving round and round rather slowly, whilst there were other parts that were

> **moving out into a long corridor and seemed to be inviting me to step on. There were also a number of doors in this room that had to be opened from time to time because they provided the clues and information with which to interpret the room. It was on closer examination of the room and the pictures that I realised that I needed to interpret and analyse what I was seeing and that this was difficult for me. I realised that my questioning had been on a superficial level and that it was not always the obvious that was the cause of what I was seeing but rather the result of what I had seen. (Molander, 1991, 1)**

The first part of my research is a history of Travellers. There is very little that has been written by or about Travellers that is easily available. In my researches I discovered three collections of books about Travellers. One collection, known as 'The Romany Collection' is at Leeds University. A second collection was made by Scott Macfie and is housed at Liverpool University Library. A third collection can be found at the Cambridge Institute Library. In addition to these sources Dennis Binns, of the Manchester Education Service, has compiled 'A Gypsy Bibliography 1990'. This has proved a useful source for articles from journals as well as newspapers. I could only find one book of photographs about New Travellers. Any other information I obtained from the Dennis Binns Bibliography and scrap books of newspaper cuttings which we keep at the Travellers Resource Base.

I also looked at the legislation that pertains to Gypsies and Travellers. This was easy to find and was fairly straight forward. In this century it is regulatory. Before this century it tended to be punitive.

I also looked at two influential reports where Travellers were mentioned. These were the Plowden Report 1967 and the Swann Report 1985. I limited myself to these two major reports.

In setting the scene I have tried to find out why Travellers have lived by but have not been part of the housed community. Their language has played some part in this as well as the pollution taboo. This is a means whereby men maintain control over women and so maintain a separate community.

There were three reasons why I chose to do a case study. In the first place I wanted to take a close look at a somewhat dramatic change taking place in a particular school, following a change of leadership. The second reason concerns the Travellers' Teachers. Of the four members of the team three had knowledge of the school. I could therefore use my colleagues as a research resource. The final reason was that this was an opportunity to take a closer look by focussing on just a few children and their individual experiences of being in school. I could not have conducted the research in this way had I done a

survey.

The changes that I was witnessing were to do with the attitudes of the staff towards Travellers' children under the ex-Head and then under the new Head. The significance of the change in attitude meant that it was much easier to co-operate with the staff for the benefit of the Travellers' children in the first place, but ultimately for the school. The Travellers' teachers have often observed that in schools where Travellers' children are made welcome, all children are welcomed and valued. I was observing this taking place.

Having completed the research I felt that it was a suitable choice to have done a case study because it showed me where the power base lay in the school. The Headteacher is the significant person in changing attitudes in a school. This has implications for other schools who have Travellers' children on the roll, which is nearly twenty percent in Norfolk.

As an insider researcher and also a teacher going into the school there were limitations that I experienced when it came to validating my research data. Of the five members of staff whom I had interviewed I was able to have all the research validated except for one member of staff. I showed this teacher some of the research material. My main concern was not to damage, in any way, the

relationship that I had built up whilst the Travellers' children were in school. This has placed some limitations on the research, but the relationships have remained intact. Establishing and maintaining good relationships are an essential part of successfully admitting Travellers' children into school. I was not prepared to jeopardies that relationship.

This research has shown me how very difficult it is to try to change attitudes in a school unless the Headteacher values all children and is prepared to try to meet their individual needs. This has significance for the Traveller Education Service because of the large number of schools involved, ninety six in Norfolk in 1989-1990.

I have made fictitious all the Travellers' names, as I wanted to protect the Gypsy families because they had asked me if I would. I have also made fictitious the names of the area and the school and all the staff, because it was the changes that I was looking at and a comparison of two different styles of Headship upon staff and children, in particular Travellers' children. I had told the staff that I would do this.

I interviewed Mrs Came because she has lived in Haynes for twenty years. She set the local scene and

made me aware of the prejudice that exists today in Haynes towards Travellers.

I was aware that my values would be evident in this research. Travellers should have their civil rights in the way that the rest of the population do. Sometimes Travellers may need to be informed of these civil rights, which means that people working with Travellers need to have this information, particularly regarding access to school and equality of regard once in school.

When I started this research I knew that I was 'deeply involved' with Travellers, their children and their education; and that I would look critically at anything that got in the way with a view to trying to find a way around it. It was for this reason that I chose to research in Haynes Junior School. No Travellers' children had ever been refused admission to the School. It was the way that the children were regarded once in school that gave me cause for concern.

Throughout the research I have been increasingly aware of my own biases. It has sometimes been a fairly painful journey and one in which I have had to be vigilant.

At an early stage I had to confront my own racism. I

had used the word 'integrate' regarding Travellers' children in school without realising the full implications of that word. To 'integrate' Travellers' children into school means to assimilate them into the predominant culture and therefore does not allow for ethnic diversity in school. In this scenario people from the majority culture tend to place little value on the minority culture and feel that there is no particular need to understand it. At the same time those from the minority culture are aware of the majority culture and that their own culture is not being valued. If their culture is not being valued they are not being valued.

Mrs Riddock, the Acting Deputy Head of Haynes Junior school, had spoken about 'integrating the Travellers' children' into her class. Having discovered how deeply entrenched my own racism was, I was beginning to realise

> **...the pernicious and pervasive nature of racism and its dialectic rel ationship with gender and class-based forms of oppression. (Verma,1989, 187)**

I talked to Mrs Riddock about Travellers in general and in particular about Violet and Sylvia . Mrs Riddock said of me 'I just felt that you had been willing to talk and not pronounce.' Had this 'talking' made any contribution towards accepting

Violet and Sylvia into her class and valuing their differences?

> **I did give them a certain amount of time and a lot of leeway... for the first half of the term... I understand about them changing in front of the other children and when they disappeared I made no comment...I had to make them realise that after half-term they were part of the class and they had to be like everyone else.**

Mrs Riddock wanted Violet and Sylvia to conform with the rest of the class. She did not really understand that living in a trailer there is very little privacy, and that dressing and undressing, and thus exposing limbs, is part of the 'pollution taboo' and Traveller girls do not do this in a public place like a classroom.

Mrs Riddock did acknowledge that there was a difference in maturity:' ...I considered them to be very mature girls, much more than most of mine...' Were Violet and Sylvia not part of the class? They were being asked to conform. Would this make them part of the class or was this cosmetic? Mrs Riddock was acknowledging that the girls were mature but I question whether she was treating them as if they were mature. Perhaps this is all part of 'integration' and some of its implications.

Mrs Riddock did acknowledge some aspects of the Travelling community: '...It is a very caring community and a close one...'.

Another concern of mine was my own bias. How could I begin to come to terms with it in a school situation in which I was the outsider. I could talk to members of the Traveller Education Service, but that could help to conceal or confirm my bias as opposed to making me aware of it. It was with that idea in mind that I asked Mrs Riddock to interview me and then to analyse the interview. Two points of difference emerged from that analysis. The first point of difference concerned the value that I placed on the site visit by Mr Davies, the new Head Teacher. Mrs Riddock said:

> **I am not sure about the attitude of the Traveller families. Are you saying that the change came about because the new Head went onto the site or could it just be that this group of families were more willing to socialise? In the past there have been many problems with Travellers' children. Are you saying that this would not have occurred if the old Head had visited the site?**

It made me realise that what I was saying was sounding too simplistic. What I was trying to say was that by meeting the Travellers half way, acknowledging their ethnic origins, then any problems that might occur could be talked over with parents. Travellers' children often help to highlight an existing problem in a school (e.g. absence of respect for School Midday Supervisors who may lack training) but they can be seen by the staff

as causing that problem. The new Head's visit to the site was significant for the Travellers, the new Head himself and the rest of the staff because it seemed to symbolise a change in attitude towards staff and children in the school. It is pointless to speculate what would have happened if the ex-Head had visited the site, except to say he might have had another perspective of Travellers.

The second point that Mrs Riddock raised was to do with my perception of the staffroom. There had been many changes in staff and it was becoming a young staff. I had not enjoyed the experience of going into the staffroom when Mr Neve had been the Headteacher. As this only occurred once or twice in 1988 and 1989 I was in no position to comment on how it was during the last year that Mr Neve had been Head in 1990.

As well as confronting my own racism, I began to become aware of my own subjectivity.

> **How did I know when my subjectivity was engaged? I looked for the warm and the cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings, and the experiences I wanted more of or wanted to avoid and when I felt moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfil my research needs. (Peshkin, 1988, 18)**

I was aware of the cool spots when I went to interview Mr Neve at his home after he had retired.

He was in a position of considerable power as the Headteacher of Haynes Junior School. How much influence the fact that he was retiring had on his attitude towards Travellers' children and how much that also influenced his attitude regarding the Traveller Education Service I shall never know, though I wondered if there was some relationship there.

> **Yes, I mean I felt it came from the top - that the Travellers' children weren't particularly wanted here. Perhaps the service was not valued for what it could offer - whereas, now I think there is much greater value. (Mrs Fisher)**

I have only recently realised that the Deputy Head who retired at the same time as Mr Neve '...frankly was very anti-Traveller' (Mrs Riddock). Mr Neve's management style has been described as 'filtering down' (Miss Miller). Perhaps in this way the former Head and his Deputy were able to confirm their biases.

I was aware that when I went to interview Mr Davies my subjectivity was alive and well. I could feel a warm spot start to well up in me.

> **Whatever the substance of one's persuasions at a given point, one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. (Peshkin, 1988, 17)**

I needed to be wary of my own feelings, so I asked the staff whom I interviewed for their views and also Mrs Anderson from the Traveller Education Service. Mrs Riddock described Mr Davies as 'totally open minded'. Mrs Smith said '...he is very enthusiastic and actually wants to improve the character of the school...' Mrs Fisher described him in this way: '...he is very approachable and listens well...' Mrs Anderson viewed Mr Davies as '...willing, open, willing to learn...' So there was a consensus view. This was probably the first time that a Traveller Education Team member had the same positive view of the Head as the staff who were interviewed in this school.

The school was an exciting place in which to be at this time. One week there would be a new carpet in the entrance hall; and another week there would be a new display stand, replacing the school sweatshirts that were for sale locked in a shop display cabinet in the entrance hall.

In contrast to the positive way staff had spoken about Mr Davies, very little was said about Mr Neve. Miss Miller said: ' I think that the ex-Head knew he was retiring, so you can't blame him for slowing down so much'. I was an outsider to the school : however, I was associated with Travellers' children, so there may have been some hesitation to talk to me

about Mr Neve. It is probably the contrast in what was said and what was not said about both people that helps to build up a picture of each person.
I interviewed five members of staff and the Head Teacher twice. The method I used was the 'focused interview'.

> **The actual interview is focused on the subjective experiences of the persons who have been exposed to the situation. Their responses enable the researcher: (a) to test the validity of his hypothesis; and (b) to ascertain unanticipated responses to the situation, thus giving rise to further hypothesis. (Cohen and Manion, 1986, 310)**

I wanted to find out if Travellers' children were treated in a comparable way, by the class teacher, as all other children. My hypothesis was that this was not always so.
What I found was that Mrs Riddock wanted Violet and Sylvia to conform to the rest of the class but did not really regard them as always being part of the class. In the language that Mrs Riddock used about the girls she did not appear to value their ethnicity.
Mrs Fisher regarded Bill as belonging to the class

> **I just regard Travelling children as ordinary children who just happen to come from a different background.**

She seems to be aware that she does not know much about Travellers and is going to spend a day with me in March 1992, meeting and talking with Travellers. Mrs Fisher would like to include something of their history in the curriculum for September 1992.

Miss Miller made Essie feel very welcome in her class and also comfortable enough to tell the other children about her background through the video.

Bill was part of Mrs Smith's class; and it was his immaturity that concerned her. However she did make one comment that needed further consideration. She said that Bill had been called a 'Gypsy'.

> **...unfortunately the children who have said that to him seem to equate it with having learning difficulties and I think that is a real problem. Something to do with your background, the fact that you are a Gypsy, means that you need a lot of special help... and I think because of that he sees it as an insult.**

This was an idea that I had not heard before; and is an area for further research. It was also an unanticipated outcome of the 'focused interview'.

The fifth member of staff that I interviewed was Mr Gray. Sean and Jim became part of his class, though they did cause Mr Gray more work. It was Mr Gray who first told me about the fact that 'behaviour' in its widest sense was a concern of the staff. This came about, I think, because Mr Gray mistook my small

tape recorder for a camera. I negotiated the use of the tape recorder with him and then proceeded to use it. It transpired that he was waiting for me to use a tape recorder that required à power point and in the meantime was talking about what was happening in the school. I offered to take this dialogue off the tape. However, he said that he was happy for me to retain it. The result of this was that it was Mr Gray who gave me the first indication that 'behaviour ' was a concern of the staff. I was able to follow this up by getting the views of the other members of staff that I interviewed. It was an aspect that I had been looking for, but I did not know in what way it would be expressed or indeed if I would get to hear about it at all. 'Behaviour' has a direct connection with Travellers as I have already indicated.

At the time of my research there were four Travellers' teachers. Three of the teachers knew Haynes Junior School. Ms Eade and I were the two teachers concerned during this period of change in the school. Mrs Anderson had arranged for Mr Davies to visit the site. They validated the research that pertained to them.

I found that Essie and Lisa were more difficult to interview than four of Violet and Sylvia's friends. I wondered if this was because they were younger. On

the other hand I did not record an interview with Violet and Sylvia or their parents because they often appeared anxious and therefore I felt that a tape recorder would be inappropriate. They were very pleased with the way the children had settled in school, were aware that they were learning and di d not appear to have anything more to add to the subject except to say that the children would go to school next winter. I had known the family for a short period in 1990 and I felt that I was getting to know them just a little better this time. They left at the end of the Spring term 1991.

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